Singing 'em to Victory

By CARL SCHURZ LOWDEN

SENATOR HARDING, do you want to know the secret of getting a fine job at the White House, a job four years long? Governor Cox, would you also like to have the recipe? Well, here it is:

"Get somebody to write a thrilling campaign song for you. Get everybody to sing it. You'll get there if your opponent doesn't outdo you at the same game."

It's simple and easy, just like that. William Henry Harrison used the recipe against Martin Van Buren. James Buchanan employed it effectively against John C. Fremont. "The Rail Splitter," of Illinois, outdid "The Little Giant" from the same state. Andrew Jackson, armed with the best song, kept John Quincy Adams out of a second term; a gentleman named Grant performed a similar service for "Andy" Johnson who rose to eminence from a tailor's bench. Such is the power of song and slogans that no candidate ever kicked the White House goal without their aid or the aid of something bearing a striking resemblance thereto.

Long before Senator Harding or Governor Cox opened innocent eyes upon a naughty world, Harrison and Van Buren staged their contest. With the famous song of "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too," the log cabin candidate won, voices up; and "Matty" was, for sure, a "used-up man." Alexander Coffman Ross thereby acquired the double honor of poet and prophet.

In this notable campaign of 1840 Billy McKibbon had written "Martin's Lament" wherein the Democratic candidate was pictured as doomed to be beaten. Something seemed lacking in the song. Tom Launder, a friend of Ross, suggested the tune of "Little Pigs" and asked Ross to fit it with suitable words. On the succeeding Sunday while singing as a member of a church choir in Zanesville, Ohio, the air of "Little Pigs" obsessed Ross. Before the sermon was finished he had created and memorized the words of "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too."

But Ross was not satisfied with his effort. The line of "Van, Van, you're a nice little man," did not please him. He wrestled with it during six days. Saturday night the political club met; Ross, busy with the perverse line, did not attend. When the members sent for him, he came and told them about the song and the line he did not like.

"Let me hear it," said a Mr. Culbertson. Ross obligingly repeated it.

"Thunder!" the man exclaimed. Just make it, 'Van's a used-up man.'"

After the first speech Ross stepped upon the platform and at once thrilled the audience with his catchy campaign effort. Cheers and yells greeted it as he responded to tumultuous encores. The next day men and boys were singing it on the streets, at the workshops, and in the dining halls.

Harrison captured the White House, largely through the extensive use of this song. As he died within a month after he went to Washington, however, I suggest to Governor Cox and Senator Harding the advisability of not imitating the tramp of the poetic feet of "Tippecanoe and Tyler too." Of course, nobody is superstitious; but it's ever wise to play safe.

John C. Fremont and James Buchanan put on a battle royal in the summer and autumn of 1856. The newly organized Republican party thought the young and ambitious Fremont would be an easy winner; and it belittled Buchanan as a man gone stale by continued wearing of the harness of governmental offices. In the Republican campaign song the explorer of the West was described as a mustang colt, and his rival was pictured as an old gray nag:

The mustang colt is strong and young,
His wind is strong, his knees not sprung.
The old gray horse is a well-known hack,
He's long been fed at the public rack.
The mustang is a full-blooded colt,
He cannot shy! He will not bolt!
The old gray nag, when he tries to trot,
Goes round and round in the same old spot!
The mustang goes at a killing pace,
He's bound to win the four-mile race!
Then do your best with the old gray hack,
The mustang colt will clear the track!

Don't you feel a bit sorry for the old gray nag that is sure to be outdistanced by a mustang colt? Don't you feel a bit fearful that the young mustang may prove too vicious in the use of his hoofs? Well, the voters of that day had the same thoughts. Writers of campaign songs received a lesson of which the theme was: pity produces sympathy for the other fellow.

The Republican song contained some good qualities, but not a sufficiency thereof; really, the bad outweighed the good. The friends of Buchanan went the Fremont fellows a few better, capitalized the contagion of humor, and did not inferentially insult their vice presidential candidate by leaving him out of their ditty. This is a light, little thing, but it worked:

When Fremont raised a flag so high
On Rocky Mountain's peak,
One little, busy bee did fly,
And light upon his cheek.
But when November's Ides arrive,
To greet the Colonel's sight,
Straight from the Democratic hive,
Two bees will on him light—
Buck and Breck.

The public is a willful creature. Now the Douglas men in 1860 used three clever stanzas—but they were too clever. They compared Lincoln to Webster and Clay, mentioned the cordwood he cut, the prayers he prayed, and besought the Republicans to keep his picture hidden. The voters just couldn't see the wisdom of going against a man merely because he owned a face that was no paragon of beauty. The song committed the same error as did that one about the mustang colt and the old gray nag; it called out sympathy for the Rail Splitter and thereby became a Democratic boomerang. It tickled Lincoln too, for he was ever joking about the homeliness with which nature had branded him. This is the song that invariably evoked a chuckle from the ungainly man:

Tell us he's a second Webster,
Or, if better, Henry Clay;
That he's full of gentle humor,
Placid as a summer's day.

Tell again about the cordwood;
Seven cords or more per day;
How each night he seeks his closet,
There alone to kneel and pray!

Any lie you tell, we'll swallow—
Swallow any kind of mixture;
But, O don't, we beg and pray you—
Don't, for land's sake, show his picture.

Beware of the campaign song, Governor Cox and Senator Harding. When you think you have a winner, you may find that you were merely building well for your rival. There is no question about a song's effectiveness; for whom it will be effective is the problem. Since the opening of the twentieth century the presidential candidates have been shy or chary in the employment of melody as means of acquiring the tenure of four years at Washington. They feared the TNT with which campaign songs are loaded.

Andrew Johnson, who became President when Lincoln was assassinated, committed a great error. He went to Chicago to lay the corner stone of a monument to Douglas, the man who had opposed Lincoln; he took a circuitous route back to the White House, meanwhile delivering political addresses in the larger cities. The adherents of Grant severely criticised him for making political use of the trip; they went further than that, and cleverly parodied "Just Before the Battle, Mother," as follows:

Just before the election, Andy,
We are thinking most of you;
While we get our ballots ready—
But, be sure, they're not for you!
No, dear Andy, you'll not get them.
But you'll get what you deserve—
Oh, yes, you'll get your leave of absence
As you "swing around the curve."

The last line had been coined by Johnson who had thus referred to the home-coming half of his journey. The chorus of four lines contained the assertions that the incumbent ought to swing, that he tried to veto Congress, and "we'll veto you."

Another parody, a sympathetic sort, however, was very popular in this campaign of 1868. Sung to the tune of "Auld Lang Syne," it praised the hero, Grant, as a second Ulysses.

Should brave Ulysses be forgot,
Who worked so long and well
On fields where fires of Death were hot
And brave men fought and fell?

He bore our country's banner on
Through scenes of direful strife,
And helped to strike the blow that saved
Our Nation's precious life.

This effusion is a near-approach to doggerel, and I doubt if it contributed anything toward Grant's success at the polls. Johnson had really gotten in bad with the people because of his Chicago foray. The Grant supporters astutely seized upon this mistake with their "Just Before Election, Andy," which was a careful piece of work. Today it would be justly considered too venomous and ferocious.

Campaign songs helped to defeat "Andy" Johnson. Just forty years before Johnson's downfall, another "Andy" was sung into the White House instead of out of it. This musical effort, "The Hunters of Kentucky," harked back to the memorable repulse of the British when they endeavored to capture the Queen of the South but were thwarted by stubborn riflemen who fired from behind cotton bales. So the partisans of this heroic first "Andy" enthusiastically warbled:

You've heard, I s'pose, of New Orleans,
It's famed for youth and beauty;
There are girls of every hue, it seems,
From snowy white to sooty!
Now, Packenham had made his brags
If he that day was lucky,
He'd have the girls and cotton bags
In spite of old Kentucky.

But Jackson, he was wide awake,
And was not scared at trifles,
For well he knew Kentucky's boys,
With their death-dealing rifles!
He led them down to cypress swamp,
The ground was low and mucky;
There stood John Bull in martial pomp,
And here stood Old Kentucky.

I might quote more of these stanzas, as the entire song has the gift of length. It certainly was a powerful lever, for it unseated John Quincy Adams who moved out shortly before "Andy" Jackson moved in.

There is real power in a campaign song. The candidate with a zippy musical bit is almost sure to win if his rival has none. If both have songs, then Napoleon's dictum applies and the side with the heaviest artillery will gain the victory of the TNT is handled with care.

Tippecanoe and Tyler Too!

These were the stanzas which gained the greatest following:

What has caused the commotion, 'motion,
'motion,
The country through?
It is the ball a-rolling on
For Tippecanoe and Tyler too!

CHORUS

For Tippecanoe and Tyler too,
And with them we'll beat Van, Van, Van:
Van's a used-up man,
And with them we'll beat little Van.

Let them talk about hard cider, cider, cider,
And log cabins too;
It will only help to speed the ball
For Tippecanoe and Tyler too.

His latchstring hangs outside the door, door,
door,
And is never pulled in;
For it always was the custom of
Old Tippecanoe and Tyler too.

He always has his table set, set, set,
For all honest and true,
To ask you in to take a bite
With Tippecanoe and Tyler too.

Pay as You Enter—By FRANK DORRANCE HOPLEY

THE other day I stood at the junction of the street car lines, in an eastern city, waiting for a car. One came up and the people began to get on board. Although there was a crowd, the loading was done in an orderly manner. Each person deposited his fare in a box at the door before going in and there was plenty of time for every one to find a seat. It was a "Pay-as-you-enter" car.

Another car came up. It was the old-time trolley car where the conductor walks through and collects the fares. Before it had stopped, the crowd swarmed in, pushing and jostling one another, crushing into the seats. When it left, the car was so full that the conductor had difficulty in getting all the nickels due.

As I looked upon the scene, it reminded me of life; life with its teeming millions, pushing and clamoring for their separate ambitions.

The majority of people are like those who boarded the second car. They rush headlong to obtain what they want. They trample one another in their quest for wealth and enjoyment.

A young man marries before he can properly support a wife, because he wants to get married "right away." "I'll take a chance," he says; "guess things will turn out all right." He does not look to the future and consider whether this precipitate step may not bring misery instead of happiness. He is not a "Pay-as-you-enter" man. He belongs in the second car.

Men and women who are ambitious to shine in the social world, although their means will not permit them to do so, are another type that will be found in the second car. They are determined to get aboard. They put on a fine appearance and for a while all goes well. Then the conductor comes around for their fares, and not having them to pay, they are put off the car.

The woman who drives her husband to despair in her desire to entertain far beyond his means; the man who thinks he must travel with a fast crowd who spends many times more money than he is able to spend; the girl who, for the sake of getting pretty clothes, contracts debts which she knows she has not the ability to pay—all these may be found in the second car. That car is always crowded.

In the "Pay-as-you-enter" car of life, there is always plenty of room. There is no crowding at the entrance. Every one gets a seat.

The man who looks ahead and will not take the first step until he is reasonably sure where his second step will land him occupies the front seat. The young man who spends less than he earns, and does not contract a debt which he cannot pay, will be found by his side. The young couple, who while in love have postponed their marriage until they have saved enough to enable them to maintain a home, are close by.

There are others in the "Pay-as-you-enter" car: men who would not plunge and speculate in business—who have built up their trade slowly but well; matrons who counted the cost of their ambitions, and then put them aside until such time as they could be honestly gratified; young men and maidens who were willing to pay for success with hard work, and not try to reach the end of the line by dodging the conductor.

So the cars of life go out, one after the other, over every line, with their loads of passengers.

On which car are you riding? On the crowded car where the mob holds sway, or the car where you "pay as you enter"?